

moment, and touches down almost immediately. This operation is as noiseless as a steam-shovel working in rocky ground; it is as birdlike as an overheated hippo getting into a suddenly-espied river.

These illusions shattered, what is left? As much as any modern planner could want. Leaving for a moment the question of parachute troops who are still supreme for certain specialized tasks, it is now recognized that gliders are an economic proposition, since large numbers of well-equipped and mounted troops can be towed with accuracy with a good chance of landing without being detected.

Apart from their purely offensive purpose, gliders have proved themselves as transports. It is recorded that within seventy minutes of instructions being received to transport the personnel of a unit to a location more than one hundred miles away, the first glider was loaded and in the air. Three and a quarter hours later their load of men and equipment had been removed, and less than ten hours later all the transport aircraft were back at base.

On another occasion a bomber crashed on return from an operation and a new engine was required. It would have taken eleven days to do this by road, yet within eight hours the engine was delivered by glider.

These examples indicate the scope of glider activity—for the speedy landing of offensive troops, for the transport of food and material, for the return transport of wounded men.

Special Briefing for Pilots

Just as important as the aircrew of the towing aircraft is the pilot of the glider, for on him, from the moment of cast-off, depends the successful culmination of the mission. These men are all members of Britain's Glider Pilot Regiment, distinct in their parachutist uniforms and



A jeep being unloaded from a Horsa glider.

their light-blue wings. They are trained by the R.A.F. first in light training aircraft and then in the engineless gliders. They attend their own special briefing before each operation, and also the briefing of the R.A.F. aircrews engaged.

Between the R.A.F. men and the glider pilots there exists a deep mutual respect and trust. An outward token of this feeling can be seen on one of the stations of the R.A.F. Group responsible for air-borne operations. Here the R.A.F. aircrews wear the silver-wing hat badge of the paratroops on the breasts of their working uniforms.

"It is our way of showing the complete unity that exists in our squadrons between the R.A.F. and the Army types," said the Station Commander, Group Captain T. M. Abraham, D.F.C. "At work, and in the mess when work is done, these boys' interests are identical."

In the airfields where R.A.F. and air-borne troops exercise, the half-affectionate, half-derisive "Pongo" and "Brown Job" is never applied to the soldiers. The soldiers look at the Albatrosses and Halifaxes and Wellingtons and say: "Me fly one of these contraptions? Not for a pension." The aircrews look at the parachutes and the gliders and say: "You could'nt get us into these things for a fortune."

Out of this simple 50-50 regard is being forged one of Britain's most effective weapons of war.